

NOTES ON A COLLECTING TOUR IN CONNECTICUT.

By R. L. DITMARS.

The Naugatuck River district of Connecticut is a collecting ground so rich in material that it seems queer to me, of it's not being mentioned more by our local collectors. For the last four years I have made short trips to the Capitol, Hartford, and hearing so much about the beautiful Naugatuck Valley, determined to spend my vacation in that district.

Last July found me in the heart of the Naugatuck Hills, at the little village of Greystone, about four miles from Waterbury. Here the hills are about 900 to 1,000 feet high, covered with a rich vegetation, and probably offer some northern forms in the line of Lepidoptera.

Besides being interested in entomology, I am also interested in herpetology, and was highly delighted when informed that the rattlesnake was found in this district, and it is a fact that where the deadly *Crotalus* is found, collecting is apt to be very good, as it shows that few have been in that locality. My first specimen taken in this district was a fine fresh specimen of *Smerinthus myops*, which flew into my window on the night I arrived.

The first few days were devoted to collecting in the valley, and here I noticed the larvæ of *Limenitis disippus* feeding on the willow. *Papilio asterias* and *troilus* were abundant, *turnus* more rare, only one variety *glaucus* was seen; *P. cresphontes* was rare; *Pieris rapæ* was not seen at all; *Argynnis cybele* was very abundant, *idalia* rather scarce, *myrina* abundant, both in the valley and on the mountain side; *Satyrus alope* and *nephele* were rather common. *Debis portlandia* seemed very scarce, only one battered specimen was seen during my stay. Heterocera were well represented; it was on a very warm day at noon that I happened to be passing along an unused road, and in stepping into the shade to rest noticed across from me a little dell in which the milk-weed was flowering; seeing something dart past and enter, I followed and found it to be a specimen of *Hemaris diffinis*. In half an hour ten good specimens were bottled, after which I could see no more; so after taking some very large *Argynnis cybele*, left the place, intending to return next day; the next day I did return and for an hour looked for *Hemaris* and caught only one, the last one taken during my entire stay, although the weather continued much the same and I hunted diligently.

One day, while making my way up a little stream on a raft, I noticed that most of the *Hygrotrechus* were spotted with red, and seeing one of a bright vermilion color, dart off, determined at once to investigate, thinking that it might be a new insect. After capturing the insect, was very much surprised to find it covered with the larvæ of *Trombidium*. It is a common occurrence to find the *Trombidium* larvæ on numerous Orthoptera and Diptera, but to find them on an aquatic insect seemed truly remarkable, and especially so in this case, as the *Hygrotrechus* never leave the water to go on shore, and how the *Trombidium* larvæ became transfixed to such lively insects is a mystery.



SCENE ON MT. TOBY.

Orthoptera were exceedingly numerous; all day could be heard the sharp song of the *Orchelimum*; the Katy-did (*Platyphyllum concavum*) was absent, however, seeming to prefer the more level farm lands in the lower part of the state.

It was at Greystone that I first became acquainted with that remarkable and beautiful grasshopper, *Spharagemon saxatile*. It was on a trip up Mt. Toby, the highest of the hills. Ascending by way of an old logging path; occasionally a *Cicindela sexguttata* would run ahead a short distance and alight in the path again, only to repeat the performance on my coming up to him; when passing the clearings *Vanessa*

milbertii would be seen, and offered a hard chase over the rough rocks. A beautiful species of *Eristalus* (*E. bastardi*), would occasionally be seen on the cardinal flowers, looking exactly like a brightly colored bee. On passing a pit of clay baked dry by the sun, I indifferently kicked over a loose piece, and underneath was a fine specimen of *Cychnus elevatus*; it surprised me to find a *Cychnus* in such a place, as there was no vegetation in the pit, which was very dry and offered no food for snails.

On up the mountain side an occasional *Thecla* and *Argynnis* would be seen. *Cicada canicularis* was making the woods ring with its sharp notes. When nearing the summit, on rather barren ground, a species of grasshopper, *Circotettix verruculatus*, was very abundant, rising by the dozen, and making a sharp crackling noise as it flew. Here an old rotten log which I stopped to investigate yielded 130 specimens of *Phenolia grossa*, and were at once named "turtle bugs" by the country boy with me.

At last on the summit, and there on the lichen-covered rocks was looking into the valley below and enjoying a magnificent view of the surrounding country. Hill after hill rose in wild confusion, covered with dense growth of fir and other trees. The enormous rock on which I stood sloped downwards in a dangerous incline to a ledge about four feet wide, from which was a precipice of fully three hundred feet, at the bottom of which began the thick woods of the mountain side.

Happening to glance at the ledge, there to my joy was the long looked for *Crotalus*. It lay tightly coiled with its long string of rattles elevated in the centre of its folds, the beautiful sulphur tints of its velvety scales showing vividly in the sunlight. Slowly and carefully I made my way down toward him, assisted by the handle of my butterfly net, which also served as a snake stick, but when half way down the wily snake saw me coming, and, preferring security rather than combat, retreated into a hole in the cliff totally inaccessible to me. Slowly making my way up, and when near the top, I saw in front what appeared to be a slight bump on the rock; but on coming up to it there was a flash of yellow wings and it flew off. After a perilous chase the insect was captured and it proved to be *Spharagemon saxatile*. So exactly did it mimic the lichen-covered rock that I would surely have passed it had it not moved. Mr. Beutenmüller, of the American Museum of Natural History, informs me that the insect has only recently been discovered. It seemed to be rare, for in my entire stay only one more was seen, and that in the same locality, on the rocks at an elevation.

A rather peculiar incident occurred while out after a woodchuck one day. Not seeing the animal after an hour's hunt, I took a shot at a passing swallow, and as it fell in front of me on level ground it disgorged what seemed to be a large berry, but on examining more closely, found it to be a ball of insects most of which were alive. It was composed of nearly a dozen winged ants, some gnats, two specimens of a small *Agrion*, five specimens of Chysomelidæ of three species, two *Casnonia* and some small Hemiptera. As some of the insects were good they were soon in my collecting bottle. Thinking that this might be an exception, I shot two more swallows, and both had the ball of insects in the mouth. The time was 6:30 p. m. This is the first time that I ever hunted insects with a gun.

When back in the city about two weeks, I noticed that one of the snakes caught during my vacation seemed to have an obstruction in the throat, and, on examining him, found the throat infested with what looked like dipterous larvæ of large size. Wishing to keep the snake alive, I removed them all with a pair of forceps and preserved them. The snake was *Heterodon platyrhinos*, popularly termed the "hog-nose," or "blowing adder," was nearly a yard long and at the thickest part of the body one and a quarter inches in diameter. This is the first time that I have heard of a dipterous parasite on Ophidia.

During my stay in Plymouth County I made several trips to adjacent towns, Reynold's Bridge offering good collecting, especially at an elevation. At Plymouth, high up among the hills, was a collector from Brooklyn; he informed me that he was doing good work in the Lepidoptera, particularly the Heterocera, and had some good Coleoptera on hand.

As a great deal of my time in this region was devoted to collecting venomous Ophidia, I had not the time to gather any large quantity of insects, but what work I accomplished in the entomological line showed the nature of this rich collecting ground.

To a collector having ample time to stay in any one place, the Naugatuck Valley offers fine collecting for the summer. Here along the Naugatuck River he may find both hill and valley collecting, and also stretches of pine growth.

The region is easily accessible from New York City by the N. Y., N. H. & H. R. R. to Bridgeport, thence by the Naugatuck Division.